United Nations A/CN.10/PV.270

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

270th meeting

Monday, 10 April 2006, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Oh Joon ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Ms. Millar (Australia): There is broad agreement that the United Nations must be responsive to the contemporary environment. That applies to this body, the Disarmament Commission, as much as to any other. We are pleased that the Disarmament Commission has again started work, but meetings are not an end in themselves. The Commission needs now to show that it can help to address today's most pressing international security concerns.

There can be no doubt that the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) is among the gravest threats confronting the international community. The international security environment has changed markedly since the end of the cold war. Globalization has increased the opportunities for States to acquire or develop WMDs. Moreover, with the rise of transnational terrorism, we are confronting the menace of terrorists fulfilling their desire to obtain and use WMDs. In that complex global environment, our strategies must be multidimensional, making full use of the range of tools developed to curb the spread of WMDs.

Australia is a strong supporter of multilateral approaches to non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. The major treaties and measures, such as Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), are central to maintaining shared international standards in that area. We also strongly support practical measures that reinforce multilateral treaties, such as export control regimes. We have embraced the Proliferation Security Initiative as an important new means to strengthen international cooperation on combating WMD proliferation.

Like others, we consider that progress on nuclear disarmament is vital to the continued political strength and viability of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). But measures to strengthen the non-proliferation regime — which benefit all States — must not be held hostage to movement on other NPT issues, important though they are. Moreover, it is impossible to conceive of a world free from nuclear weapons in the absence of complete and permanent assurances of non-proliferation.

In a climate of concern about the prospect of renewed horizontal nuclear proliferation, there should be no question about the urgency of the universal application of the strengthened safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency — the additional protocol. It is clear that the additional protocol, together with a comprehensive safeguards agreement, is the safeguards standard needed to maintain the integrity of the IAEA safeguards system. We urge all States that have yet to sign or ratify an additional protocol to take prompt action in that regard.

The uncontrolled proliferation of conventional arms has adverse effects on the security and stability of many countries, including within our region. We know only too well the significant costs and destabilizing impact of the uncontrolled flow of small arms and light

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

06-30396 (E)

weapons. Australia looks forward to the Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms, and we encourage all Member States to engage constructively to ensure the effective implementation of its aims.

In addition to national measures to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, we also see value in encouraging regional approaches to implement the Programme of Action, which can develop effective means of addressing common concerns, such as sustainable peacebuilding and security-sector reform. A regional approach also provides particular scope for targeted capacity-building, in accordance with the specific requirements of the recipient State.

While much has been done to address the humanitarian tragedy caused by landmines, much more remains to be done, not only in clearing mine areas but also in rehabilitating affected individuals and communities and preventing the further use of those weapons, particularly by non-State actors. As President-designate of this year's Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, Australia urges all States which have yet to do so to ratify or accede to the Convention, and we warmly encourage non-States parties to participate in the Meeting as observers.

Like many other countries, Australia is very concerned about the threat to civil aviation should terrorists or other non-State actors acquire and use shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles, or man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS). Australia has already played a leading role in international efforts to counter the proliferation of shoulder-fired missiles. In 2004, the General Assembly unanimously adopted an Australian-sponsored draft resolution on MANPADS (resolution 59/90), which encourages United Nations Member States to introduce or strengthen measures to ban the transfer of MANPADS to non-State actors, including terrorist and criminal groups. Last year, we were again the lead sponsor of a strengthened version of the draft resolution, which was once again adopted unanimously, as resolution 60/77.

As Plenary Chair of the Wassenaar Arrangement in 2006, Australia will shortly commence outreach to selected non-Wassenaar countries. We are also taking forward, over the next few years, an international diplomatic initiative to heighten awareness of the MANPADS threat and encourage States to put in place more effective controls over the manufacture, storage and transfer of MANPADS. In October this year, as part of our national initiative, we plan to hold an awareness-raising seminar in New York, which will deal with technical aspects, the scope of proliferation, current policy responses and future measures, including strengthening national implementation.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): The United States delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, the representative of the Republic of Korea, chairing the Disarmament Commission. You can count on the full support of the United States delegation as you guide our proceedings.

The United States also welcomes the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, and wishes him well in his new endeavours.

After three years of inaction, the Disarmament Commission is back to work, on the basis of a balanced agenda. The issues that the Commission will address in the coming weeks and years are important ones, and the United States is committed to working with all delegations as, together, we seek to develop consensus recommendations. The task will not be easy and there are no guarantees that agreement will be attained at the end of the day. But the very fact that we have begun this deliberative process is a vital first step, and is evidence that not every element of the United Nations disarmament machinery is ossified.

All delegations share in this achievement, but our delegation would like to pay special tribute to our colleague Ambassador Sylvester Rowe of Sierra Leone. Ambassador Rowe's tireless efforts last year, in countless informal meetings and organizational sessions of the Commission, in no small measure brought us to this point, and we sincerely thank him for his leadership.

In the days ahead, the United States intends to lay out its positions in detail on the issues before the Commission, namely, nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons and measures to improve the working methods of the Commission. We hope thereby to advance our collective work, even as we seek to provide the fullest possible understanding of the United States point of view on the issues before us.

Without delving too deeply, we would now like to make a few preliminary observations on the issues before us.

On nuclear matters, let us simply state that none of the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) can be achieved fully to include the Treaty's universalization, which the United States has long supported, as long as certain States parties to the NPT continue to seek to develop nuclear weapons, thereby violating their obligations under the Treaty. Moreover, the NPT's central emphasis on nuclear non-proliferation should be the guiding principle of all States parties, as we work together to fulfil article VI of the Treaty.

Regarding confidence-building measures, our delegation recognizes that, in its last full issue cycle, the Commission made significant progress in this area and came quite close to agreement on what the United States and most other Member States believed to be a highly useful consolidated working paper. Our delegation believes that the Commission should strive during this issue cycle to complete work on that document.

Finally, nothing pleases the United States more than to see the strong support across every region of the globe for the notion that this body is important and therefore should be made as relevant to the international security needs of Member States, and as effective in its operations, as humanly possible.

We look forward to a broad and deep discussion of Disarmament Commission improvement with other delegations in plenary meetings and elsewhere. Our delegation comes to the task of making the Commission the best that it can be with an open mind, recalling the need to proceed in a transparent manner and on the basis of consensus.

This and other United States statements before the Commission will be made available on the website of the United States Mission to the United Nations.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of the United States for his kind words addressed to the Chair.

Mr. Nguyen Duy Chien (Viet Nam): First of all, Mr. Chairman, I would like, on behalf of the delegation of Viet Nam, to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election as officers of the Disarmament Commission at its 2006 session. I am confident that your diplomatic experience and skill will guide the session to a successful outcome.

The delegation of Viet Nam fully associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Our intervention, therefore, will be limited to the following points.

First, like many other delegations, that of Viet Nam regrets that at its last two sessions the Disarmament Commission failed to achieve the intended results. Despite this failure, we continue to trust in the importance of the Commission as the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, leading to the submission of concrete recommendations on those issues. Our delegation therefore supports and is ready to join all efforts and initiatives to make the 2006 session a successful one.

Secondly, nuclear weapons continue today to pose the most serious threat to international peace and security. Viet Nam has consistently called for the total elimination of nuclear arsenals and is committed to closely cooperating with the international community to get rid of those dangerous weapons. Our delegation once again wishes to stress the importance of the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice which states that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

It is universally recognized that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) constitutes the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. We reaffirm the need for nuclear-weapon States to fully comply with all their obligations and commitments under article VI, and with the 13 practical steps, to which they agreed in the 2000 NPT Review Conference, with a view to accomplishing the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In the context of very slow progress towards nuclear disarmament in recent years, it has become more pertinent and justified that the nuclear-weapon States strictly undertake their responsibilities to stop the improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems, and, as an interim measure, to de-alert, deactivate and gradually reduce them.

Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority.

At the same time, our delegation wishes to emphasize the legitimate right of all States parties to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, without discrimination, in conformity with article IV of the Treaty. We stress that the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system is a fundamental pillar to consolidate and enhance the compliance and verification system of the non-proliferation regime.

Thirdly, we firmly believe that nuclear-weapon-free-zones not only make a significant contribution towards achieving regional and international security but also strengthen the NPT regime and the process of total nuclear disarmament.

In our view, one of the most important factors determining the effectiveness of the treaties establishing such nuclear-weapon-free-zones is the participation by the nuclear-weapons States in protocols annexed to the relevant Treaties. In our region, the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone symbolizes the determination and efforts of the countries of South-East Asia to advance the cause of peace and stability in the region and of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament as a whole.

Fourthly, one significant achievement that the international community has made in the process of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament is the conclusion of the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Attaching great importance to the CTBT, Viet Nam signed it on 24 September 1996. On 23 February 2006, the President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam signed the decision to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The instrument of ratification of the Treaty by Viet Nam was recently deposited with the Secretary-General. We hope that those nations that have not yet signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will sign and ratify it at an early date so that the Treaty can take effect.

Finally, we support the NAM position that efforts to improve the methods of work of the Disarmament Commission should be seen as an integral part of the whole process of United Nations reform, particularly as concerns the revitalization of the General Assembly, and that this should be carried out in a balanced and comprehensive manner.

Mr. Minami (Japan): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka on his assumption of the position of Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. I am sure that, under his leadership, the efforts of the international community for a peaceful and secure world will be competently guided. He enters his position at a difficult and trying time for global security, and we wish him all the best in his endeavours.

I would also like to extend our sincerest congratulations to the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau on the assumption of their important posts. The Japanese delegation is prepared to lend its full support to the activities of the Chairman, and to actively participate in these substantial and politically important deliberations to fulfil the two mandates set out in the agenda of the Disarmament Commission.

At this point I would like to draw special attention to the consensus reached among member States with regard to adding a new item to the traditional agenda for this year's deliberations, namely, the issue of measures for improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the Disarmament Commission. In the light of the current situation, for the Disarmament Commission to adequately play its anticipated role, firmly laying the groundwork for substantive deliberations in connection with the reactivation of the work of the Disarmament Commission is extremely vital, if improvement is to be achieved. The orientation and means to reactivate the work of the Disarmament Commission is to be duly examined at this session. We truly want agreement to be reached on appropriate recommendations or guidelines to present to the General Assembly. Let me assure you, Mr. Chairman, that the Japanese delegation will spare no effort to that end.

Looking back at the short history of the Disarmament Commission, we can point to a number of commendable achievements. In 1992, the Commission produced guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters. In 1993, it produced recommendations and guidelines for regional approaches to disarmament. In 1996, it reached agreement on guidelines for international arms transfers. And in 1999, it produced

two sets of guidelines, on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and on conventional arms control.

That record is laudable, to say the least. It was therefore regrettable that the 2003 session ended without final adoption of the anticipated document on nuclear disarmament and conventional arms issues. Since then the Disarmament Commission has carried out no substantive discussions, leading many countries to express deep disappointment at the current state of affairs. In order to break the current deadlock, we, as States members of the Commission, must be prepared to go the extra mile and to shoulder our responsibilities.

At the end of last year consensus was reached on an agenda, commencing the first substantive discussions in three years. Consequently, the great disappointment the international community has felt towards the Disarmament Commission over the past three years has now turned into great expectations. The Disarmament Commission now has an opportunity to shake off the bad reputation attached to it over the past few years by utilizing the next three years to carry out an energetic debate to bring about beneficial results and respond to the great expectations to which I have referred.

I would like to make a brief reference to Japan's basic position on the other items on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission.

Japan, as the only nation to have experienced the devastation of nuclear bombing, earnestly desires the realization of a peaceful world free from nuclear weapons. The incremental implementation of concrete measures is necessary if that lofty, but achievable, goal is to be attained. A realistic approach to complete nuclear disarmament is best represented by the draft resolution on nuclear disarmament submitted by Japan each year at the General Assembly. Last year, in connection with the sixtieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we redrafted that draft resolution in stronger and more concise terms. As resolution 60/65, it was adopted during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly with the positive votes of an overwhelming 168 countries, the highest number yet. Although last year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the 2005 United Nations world summit failed to reach agreement on a substantial outcome document for disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, the tremendous support extended to Japan's draft resolution demonstrates the international community's continuing commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The General Assembly has also adopted other resolutions on nuclear disarmament, and it is crucial to combine those efforts to promote nuclear disarmament in order to build momentum to attain that common goal of the international community.

The regime established by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is currently being confronted by a number of serious challenges, such as the nuclear issues relating to Iran and to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In order to maintain and strengthen the NPT regime, the international community needs to make urgent efforts in that regard. The NPT is the central foundation that supports all the other building blocks of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Both the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States must therefore fully implement their obligations and commitments under the NPT.

Japan believes that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is of crucial importance as one of the concrete measures to avert nuclear proliferation and to promote nuclear disarmament. Japan therefore continues to urge the States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty, with a view to its early entry into force. In that connection, Japan would like to welcome Viet Nam's recent ratification of the Treaty.

Moreover, it is also critical to make further efforts to strengthen nuclear security measures. If the potential damage and psychological effects of nuclear terrorism are taken into account, the importance of preventing nuclear terrorism from becoming a reality cannot be understated. In order to avert such an occurrence, fully implementing the necessary measures — especially in relation to the physical protection of fissile and radioactive materials — is vitally important. The universalization of International Atomic Agency (IAEA) additional protocols will also contribute to improving nuclear security — which Japan, in cooperation with other concerned IAEA member States, is actively promoting.

The key characteristic of conventional weapons is that they are inflicting actual physical destruction and casualties in conflict regions today. Measures to reduce casualties and destruction in current regions of

conflict, and practical efforts to prevent future destruction, are therefore clearly necessary. That requires an approach different from the conventional approach taken with regard to disarmament vis-à-vis weapons of mass destruction and non-proliferation: one that, from an extensive and diversified perspective, includes confidence-building measures through improved transparency and contributions to post-conflict peacebuilding, in coordination with humanitarian reconstruction assistance, in addition to restricting the production, use and transfer of the weapons themselves.

As one part of that approach, utilizing the forum provided by the Disarmament Commission to discuss guidelines for confidence-building measures would be particularly beneficial. Over the course of three years, from 2000 to 2003, we conducted fruitful deliberations on that important subject. As a result of those discussions, we now have the working paper included in the Disarmament Commission's 2003 annual report (A/58/42). Japan supports the Chairman's idea of making that the basis for our further discussions. Based on the changes that have taken place in international affairs and the various developments in the field of conventional weapons since those deliberations took place, we hope agreement can be reached among the members of the international community on realistic and effective guidelines that reflect the current situation.

It is our hope that our future discussions will become landmark steps enabling the Disarmament Commission to fulfil its key responsibility to establish international peace and security, and that they will lead to the further development of the work of the Commission.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.